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A FAREWEL ADDRESS
TO THE
PARISHIONERS OF CATTERICK.
BY THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, M. A.

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MDCCLXXIII.

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My Brethren, and Fellow-Christians,

IT will be natural for you to inquire, how it should come to pass, that a minister, with whom you have lived on the best terms, should leave you and a situation many ways agreeable and beneficial to him, not only without any prospect of preferment, the usual motive for such changes, but the contrary.

As far as I can judge of myself, since I came among you, no preferment would have tempted me to a change; and I have assuredly never sought any other: but here I thought quietly to have ended my days.

It hath pleased God in his providence to order it otherwise. And his commands are to be obeyed, and his will preferred, before every earthly consideration or advantage.

You are many of you no strangers to the cause of my short absences from you at different times, these two or three years past. You have heard that there was a design set on foot to move our governors, to lighten some burdens that are laid upon clergymen, when they enter upon a cure of souls, in requiring them to subscribe to the xxxix articles of our church, and declare their approbation of every thing in the common-prayer book as being agreeable to the word of God.

The request humbly made to parliament was, that we might be required to subscribe to no-

thing but the Bible, the word of God, and not to the articles or any form of prayer or worship drawn up by fallible men. And I have no doubt but you of yourselves would think this sufficient, and that, as your ministers are to teach you nothing but the pure word of God, they ought not to be put upon subscribing to any thing else.

But you are farther to know, that some engaged in this petition to parliament, and myself among the rest, in hope that it would lead also to an amendment of many things in our liturgy or common-prayer book.

You will carefully distinguish here, that our holy religion itself, the religion of Christ, can never be amended. *That* is always invariably the same; always most perfect and compleat; and is contained in the inspired writings of the New Testament.

But the religion which men have made out of it, whether contained in the common-prayer book, or any other book, this will be liable to errors and imperfections, and often want amendment.

And thus at the reformation from popery, when our forefathers asserted the sufficiency of holy scripture unto salvation, and their right of interpreting it for themselves; they purged out of their liturgy or common-prayer book many idolatrous and superstitious practices, such as *praying to saints, viz. dead men and women; praying to the mass-God, or the bread in the sacrament;*

ment ; praying in Latin ; the use of oil and spittle in baptism ; extreme unction, or anointing dying persons with oil ; lighting up candles on Candlemas-day ; marking the forehead with ashes on Ash-Wednesday ; with many the like idle fopperies and trumpery, which are still retained among the Papists, who are in no small number in your own parish, against whose seducing arts I beg you to be continually upon your guard.

Endeavours have been used, under several of our princes since, to render our common-prayer book more strictly agreeable to the holy scriptures, than it could be all at once at its first composing. And particularly about fourscore years ago, at the revolution, with the countenance of those pious princes, King William and Queen Mary, many great and excellent men, Archbishop Tillotson, Bishops Patrick, Burnet, and others, begun the good work, and made great progress in it ; but through the violent opposition of some factious persons, it came to nothing. From that time to this, no attempts have been made, nor any thing done by public authority ; through fear, perhaps, of creating disturbances in the state. Altho', whenever the experiment is made, I doubt not but it will be found, that an improved liturgy, brought nearer the standard of holy scripture, would be generally acceptable to the nation, and contribute to the public peace, as well as to the promotion of true religion.

In the mean time, the errors that call for amendment in the common-prayer book, give

great pain to serious considerate men, zealous for the purity of God's worship. Lesser mistakes and faults in human things ought surely to be borne with ; for there is nothing perfect here below. But where a man esteems any thing contrary to God's word, and sinful, tho' others may not so esteem it, he cannot, consistently with integrity, comply with it.

In this sinful light all those prayers appear to me, which are addressed to the Trinity, (as, O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity) to Christ, to the Holy Ghost, or to any other person, but God himself. For our blessed Saviour always offered up prayer himself to God, *his Father and our Father, his God and our God.* John xx. 17. and he also enjoined us to pray to the Father only ; Luke xi. 2. *When ye pray, say, Our Father, &c.* Many of the prayers in the liturgy are truly excellent, and quite agreeable to this rule and example of holy scripture. There are also many which are not so ; particularly in the litany ; which are immediately directed to Christ, and not to God. I cannot approve, or offer up such prayers myself ; or authorize them to be offered up by another for me. The case is different with regard to you, who have no authority in the church, who are only hearers, and do not lead the devotions of others. If you should disapprove of any part of the service which you hear, you can pass it over, and not join in it : but your minister, by reading it, makes it more his own.

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I cannot therefore continue in the use of such forms of worship which I believe to be sinful, without the guilt of continual insincerity before God, and endangering the loss of his favour for ever. For he *requireth truth in the inward parts*, Psalm li. 6. an entire rectitude of heart. He will in no case dispense with the habitual neglect of truth and uprightness, and least of all in our solemn prayers and addressees to himself.

To leave a station of ease and affluence, and to have to combat with various straits and hardships of an uncertain world, is but a dark prospect. But we must willingly submit to this hard lot, when not to be avoided without deserting our duty to God and his truth. And we have great encouragement given us by our divine Master and Saviour Christ. Matthew x. 32. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven." And Mark x. 29, 30. "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come, eternal life." It is of small concern in what outward circumstances we pass

over the short term of life, if we can but obtain that blessed approbation in the end;—
 “ Well done, good and faithful servant;—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Matthew xxv. 23.

It is a great satisfaction, at this my departure from you, that I can truly say, “ I have coveted no man’s silver, nor gold, nor apparel.” *Acts* xx. 33. In nothing have I made a gain of you, or sought to enrich myself, nor am I enriched by you at all, but what was over and above the supply of necessary wants, has been freely expended in the various ways, in which it was thought might be most useful for your present benefit and future happiness. I have not sought, *Yours*, but *You*. And although humbled before God under a sense of many failings and neglects, yet in some low degree, I hope I may say, that “ in simplicity “ and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly “ towards you.” *2 Cor.* i. 12.

I have endeavoured to teach you the truth which Christ our Lord taught, as far as I was able to learn it, by an impartial and diligent search of the holy scriptures. And I often reminded you, that you were not to believe any thing because spoken by me, but to examine and compare how far it was agreeable to holy scripture, our only rule and guide. And my discourses, of late years, have been altogether expositions of large portions of the New Testament,

tament, with such inferences as naturally and plainly flowed from them, that you might see it was the word of God which was endeavoured to be spoken to you, and not the word of man.

In these discourses I was led continually to point out to you, that religion lay not in outward forms and ordinances even of God's own appointment, though they be helps to it; but in an entire conversion and devotedness of the heart to God, influencing to sobriety, chastity, brotherly love, kindness, integrity, in all your conversation; to do every thing out of a sense of duty to God ever present with and supporting us in life, and chiefly for his infinite love to us in Christ Jesus our Lord, by whom he *baith called us unto his eternal glory*, 1 Pet. v. 10. And that this inward sense of God carried along with you into your daily labours and business, would sanctify them all to you, preserve you innocent and holy, sweeten the unavoidable toils and cares of the present life, and enable you to resign it with joy and in peace.

I have often pressed upon you the duty of family-religion.—That every house should be a little church as it were, wherein all the members of it were carefully instructed in the things of God, and once at least, at the close of each day, called together to join in short prayer to God, since in your way of business you can seldom meet all together at any other time without inconvenience. This would be a constant check upon parents in their daily conduct,
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and would make them hasten home with pleasure after their labours were over, to worship God in their families, which would thus become orderly and happy. And this might be a means of preventing that early depravity and corruption of the youth of both sexes, which is so alarming, and from which they are seldom to be recovered, when once you have lost this season of instruction, and of forming habits of piety and virtue. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Prov. xxii. 6.

Still more have I inculcated upon you the necessity of keeping the *Lord's-day* holy, in obedience to God's primary law, when he first placed man upon the earth, never repealed since, and which was regulated anew, and confirmed by the authority and example of our Saviour Christ and his apostles:—As many of each family as can be allowed, to attend the public worship of the Great Creator and heavenly Father, and to be mindful afterwards of a suitable employment of your time at home. For spending one part of this sacred day in unnecessary worldly cares, or in sports and diversions, tends to efface every serious impression made on the mind on the other part, and by degrees leads to spend the whole of it in the same ungodly sort. Not that the service of God is to make us morose, or sad and uncheerful at this or at any time. There are ways of passing this holy day, in walking out and contemplating

templating the works of God, in pleasing charitable offices to our neighbours, and in innocent useful conversation, which will chear and refresh both mind and body, far beyond those noisy and riotous games, always accompanied with profane oaths, and generally ending in the alehouse, or worse.

A writer of great note, though no clergyman, remarks :

“ I believe it may be laid down as a certain fact, that no master or mistress of a family can have a true concern for religion, or be a child of God, who does not take care to worship God by family-prayer.”——*Hartley*, vol. ii. p. 336.

To which I would add, that I have seldom found any serious religion in a parish or family, where the Lord's day was customarily profaned. And, as he concludes—“ Let the observation of the fact determine” in both cases.

It has been matter of deep concern to me, that I have not seen so much of the fruits of my labours as I desired among you. Parents, ignorant themselves, and refusing instruction, must of course neglect all godly care of their children. Very seldom do farmers meet at markets on their worldly business without giving more or less into drunken excesses, which shews, that they are under the restraint of no religious principle. Much bad practice and
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open sin is visible in many.—But I would not now complain. Let us all make haste to repent and amend—for the time is short. I would hope that more good may have been done than I know of, and that there are more truly pious than the few that appear to be so: and that some seed of the word, that has been sown, may hereafter spring up, and bear good fruit.

It will be your wisdom, and happy for you, and a cause of rejoicing to me, if from this time forwards your lives be conducted with such Christian sobriety and watchfulness, in a daily progressive improvement in virtue and holiness, that I might be able to say, “I have laboured, and another hath entered into my labours,” John iv. 38, and that the work of my successor may be made more easy to him from what you have learned of me. More especially if it should please the *God of all grace*, 1 *Pet.* v. 10. that as Samson served his country more at his death, than in his life, you also may be more benefited by this my last farewell exhortation to you, than by what I have laboured in much weakness, but great sincerity, for the ten years that I have been with you.

Soon shall all the friendships and connections of this world be dissolved, and at an end. The parting, and the separation, which death must have made betwixt us in a few years, perhaps much sooner, is only anticipated a little. And it may be a providential blessing
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to both you and me, if I may but thereby be approved, and found faithful unto the end, for which I desire the help of your prayers; and if this my voluntary dismission of myself from my station and ministry among you, to which I am constrained by a principle of conscience and obedience to Christ, as I firmly believe, may contribute to convince you,

That the gospel of Jesus is the truth of God—the pearl of great price, *Matthew* xiii. 45. for which we are to be willing to part with every thing rather than fail of obtaining it: to induce you

To do nothing now, which you shall not approve at that solemn hour when you leave the world:

And to be ready at all times, and even desirous to have the common-prayer book reformed, and the public worship of God in it made more conformable to the holy scriptures, for your own sakes, and that of your conscientious Pastors, whenever it shall please God, in his providence, to incline our gracious Prince and Parliament to set about so needful a work.

And now, O Holy Father, *the blessed and only potentate*, in conformity to what I believe thy will and my duty, I resign unto thee, from whom I received them, my ministry and people. Do thou raise up unto them a faithful

ful teacher, who shall more effectually preach thy word, turn many from sin, and bring all nearer to thee, their only portion and happiness. And graciously dispose of me, thine unworthy servant, where and how I may best be enabled to serve thee according to the pure gospel of thy son, through whom I desire to find acceptance with thee, now and for ever.

F I N I S.